

TEXAS OUTREACH OFFICE (TORO) ANNUAL REPORT—FY05

INTRODUCTION:

In order for the reader to have a greater understanding of the work of the TORO, we present the following basic assumptions and underlying principles and processes which guide us in developing our activities in Texas border communities and with our Mexican counterparts:

- ✚ We see the role of the USMXBorder Health Commission as a three part systems approach for facilitating Border Binational Health:

Convenor—Bringing the right people together to work on the issues at hand

Policy/Planning—Working with policy makers to remove barriers to collaboration and cooperation (includes information and data collection, assessments and dissemination for informed decision-making)

Resource Mobilization—to the states for them to work on programs such as EWIDS (Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance) and Healthy Border 2010 which strengthen local binational and border public health infrastructure. This function also includes working with the states to report outcomes to satisfy federal funder/investor requirements.

- ✚ We see our role as State Outreach Office of the USMBHC as mentioned above:

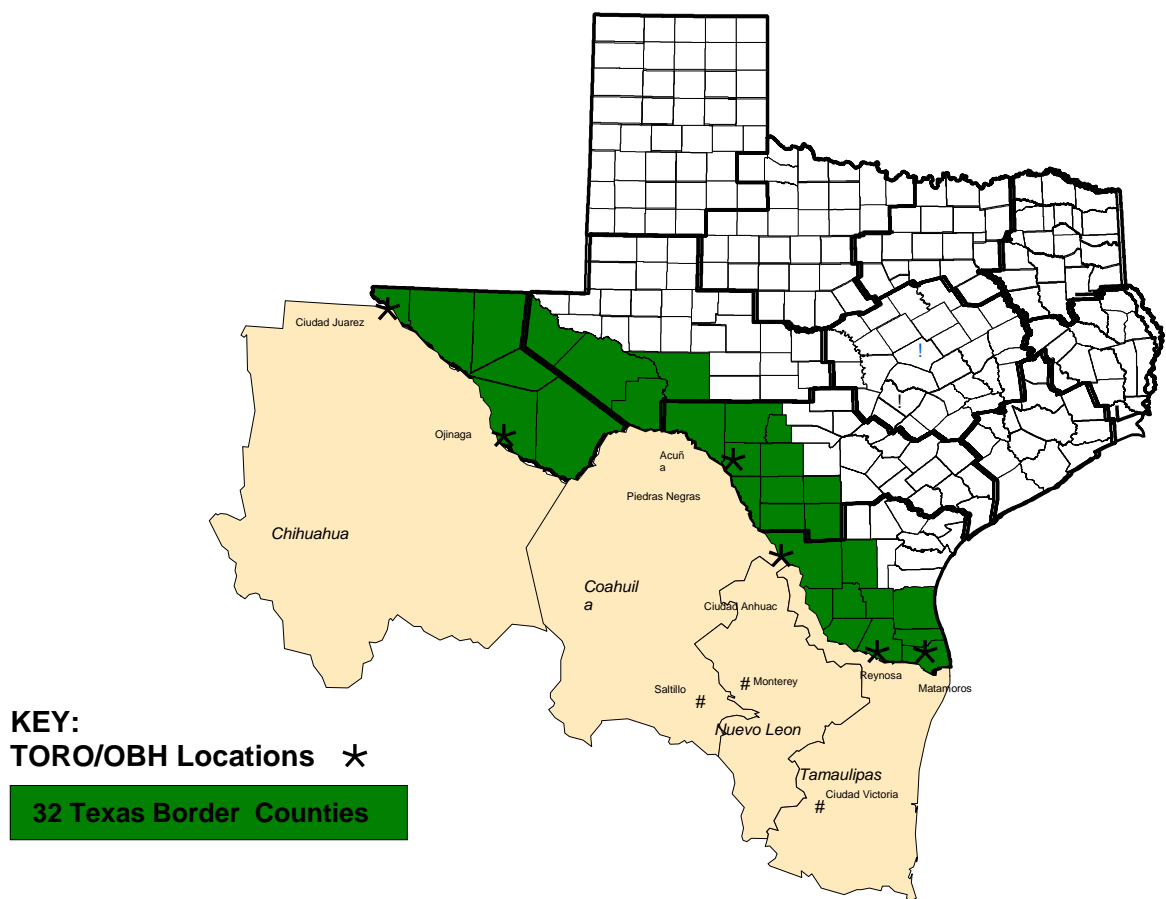
Implementation of the programs such as EWIDS, Healthy Border 2010, Border Binational Health Week, Vaccination Weeks of the America, etc.

Strengthening local binational and border public health infrastructure
Support of the Commission roles of Convening; and Information and Data collection, assessment and dissemination

Issues to Address:

1. Healthy Border 2010 Program-- Implementation of the Healthy Border 2010 program within Texas

Texas is a very large state, so we have created 5 Texas Outreach Sub-Offices (TESORO's) located in El Paso, Presidio, Eagle Pass, Laredo and Harlingen/McAllen.



The following pages contain the list of Healthy Border Projects and their descriptions by area:

El Paso area:

1. TORO provided support for the El Paso/Juarez/Las Cruces Binational Health Council to hold meetings, provide translations and travel support for the Co-Presidents to attend and participate in the Annual Meeting of the US-Mexico Border Health Association held in Laredo in June, 2005.

Cost: \$5,000

Observations: This group has met once and has no firm plans yet of what they want to accomplish with their Healthy Border allotment of funds. We propose to support their activities in FY06 but to a somewhat lesser degree.

2. TORO partnered with the El Paso City/County Health Department to complete the Immunization project we began in FY04. This project consisted of increasing awareness of the importance of childhood immunizations through an ongoing health promotion and media campaign in the City of El Paso, as well as working with Vaccine Providers to update their data bases to more accurately reflect immunization rates for the area.

Cost: \$7,500

Observations: Unless we mutually develop more specific deliverables for FY06 we will not support this project again. The benefit from media campaigns is difficult to measure and there are probably more beneficial activities we could support for this area.

3. TORO partnered with the Health Education Training Center Alliance of Texas (HETCAT) to provide a Basic Trauma Life Support Instructor course for Unidad de Rescate del Gobierno del Estado in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico. This course, held in Chihuahua March 28-April 1, 2005, provides a cadre of instructors who will be able to teach emergency care providers throughout the State of Chihuahua for an expanding emergency care workforce. The course was taught by certified instructors and provides internationally recognized certification for new instructors and the providers they will teach.

Cost: \$4,100

Observations: This was a very good project but may be more appropriately funded with Mexican dollars.

4. TORO partnered with the Migrant Clinicians Network and the Paso del Norte Collaborative to implement the third stage of the proposed three-stage public health study of infectious disease burden among injection drug users along the US-Mexico border region. The study is based on street-based peer recruitment of injection drug users to conduct the following

- Screening and testing for infectious diseases—HIV, hepatitis, syphilis, and tuberculosis
- Administration of a behavioral risk and mobility survey
- Providing test results with full counseling and appropriate referrals
- Providing hepatitis A and B vaccines

Cost: \$6,000

Observations: As of the date of this writing, the study results have not been compiled. The project has good collaborative support locally and looks promising so far.

5. TORO supported the Presidio/Ojinaga Binational Health Council in the accomplishment of the following:

- Regular bi-monthly meetings were held (alternating sides between Presidio and Ojinaga to discuss plans for future activities and hear reports on current activities
- Officers attended and participated in the Annual Meeting of the USMX Border Health Association in Laredo this June.
- Provided 2 de-fibrillators to local ambulances
- City of Presidio and City of Ojinaga have signed agreements which establish local procedures related to preparedness and response for emergencies in Presidio and Ojinaga.
- Provided support for two local youth-oriented activities: The Little Flowers local folklorico dancers and the local Little League Baseball teams. The Council felt that since this is a fairly isolated rural area, young people needed more wholesome activities, especially those that involve physical activity.
- Providing support for the Seniors Physical Fitness Program in which instructors have aerobic and fitness classes daily at the Seniors Citizens Center. The seniors were bored too and need to have physical activity to do.

Cost: \$14,500

Observations: This is one of our “shining” projects and a good demonstration of what a local community can do on their own with a small amount of help. We will likely continue with level or increased funding for them for FY06

See also reports of their activities as participants of Border Binational Health Week and the two Vaccination Week celebrations

6. TORO partnered with the Fort Stockton Parks and Recreation Department (City of Fort Stockton, Pecos County) to provide a range of physical activities targeting residents of all age groups within Fort Stockton and from the surrounding area. They have developed worksite wellness programs for the schools and community employers. For the school wellness website:

<http://www.fort-stockton.k12.tx.us/schools/middleschool/cduarte/wellness/>. This June, they hosted a community-wide “Family Play Day” which was well attended by local and surrounding county residents.



Fort Stockton Tumbling Team “shows off” at the Family Play Day, June 19, 2005

Cost: \$4,500

Observations: Another “shining example” of what a motivated community can do with a small amount of money

They want to participate in Border Binational Health Week (without asking for funding support) for October, 2005.

7. TORO partnered with the Cactus Clinic in Sanderson (Terrell County) for the implementation of wellness program for their community including:

- Diabetes education and support group for local diabetic residents and their families, including one-on-one educational counseling with 25 diabetic residents
- Six week education program for diabetic patients in a group setting

- La Cocina Alegre Cooking Program—a six weeks cooking and food education program focusing on healthier cooking methods (for 15 participants)
- Health Fair at Sanderson Jr. High School—health screenings, dental screenings, Nutrition Education and Tobacco and Drug Prevention Education
- Walking program for residents from June through August
- Aerobic exercise classes from April through May
- Water aerobic classes from June through mid August targeting elderly residents
- Volley ball program twice a week with 6 teams, June through mid August (teams are co-ed and made up of youth and adult participants)

Cost: \$3,500

Observations: Sanderson is a very small town in one of the most sparsely populated counties in Texas. The closest town in Fort Stockton, approximately 60 miles away. These projects had lots of participation considering the small number of people actually living in town. Participants drive from their homes sometimes 25-30 miles to play volleyball, swim, etc. We will likely fund at level or increased funding for FY06. Very inexpensive program for what it means to this community.

8. TORO partnered with the Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend to provide additional mental health and domestic violence prevention services to residents of Reeves, Jeff Davis, Brewster and Presidio Counties (frontier counties)

- 67 counseling sessions, serving 411 clients
- 31 educational presentations to 628 participants

Cost: \$3,500

Observations: Very inexpensive project for the deliverables produced. We will try to fund this project for FY06

9. TORO supported the activities of the Amistad Binational Health Council (Del Rio, Val Verde County and Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila) in the accomplishment of the following:

- Regular monthly meetings were held (alternating sides between Del Rio and Ciudad Acuña) to discuss plans for future activities and hear reports on current activities—business section of meeting
- The regular monthly meetings typically have a theme of one of the selected health priorities (domestic violence, substance abuse, tuberculosis, vector control, emergency preparedness) and speakers from both sides give presentations of what they are doing in respect to that issue—presentation section of meeting
- Officers attended and participated in the Annual Meeting of the USMX Border Health Association in Laredo this June.
- They have developed a web page of their own to display data, activities, etc. as well as for communication with internal and external customers
- Amistad Binational Health Council was one of the parent sponsors of the Binational Substance Abuse Youth Rally held in Del Rio in December, 2004. This project was supported with funds from the TORO and BHC (see description under # below)

Cost: \$4,000

Observations: We will continue to support this project in FY06 with level or increased funding, depending on what they want to do in the way of Healthy Border 2010 activities

See also the October 2004 BBHW activities report. They received \$20,000 to support a variety of local activities

They have received funding (\$15,000) for October 2005 BBHW

10. TORO partnered with the Quad Counties Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse to sponsor a Binational Youth Rally for Substance Abuse Prevention held in Del Rio, December 2004. Approximately 700 teens and pre-teens, parents and others attended. A variety of activities and presentations were held including basketball tournaments, presentations on anger management, Drug Prevention Bingo (players get to listen to prevention messages before each new number is called)

Cost: \$4,900

Observations: Very well attended with participants from both sides. May be able to repeat it with less money for FY06. We sponsored one in Ciudad Acuña in FY04 so if we do another next year, it will probably be in Cd. Acuña.

11. TORO supported the activities of the HOPE-K Trinational Health Council (Eagle Pass, Maverick County, Kickapoo Nation, and Piedras Negras, Coahuila) in the accomplishment of the following:

- Regular monthly meetings were held (alternating between the Kickapoo, Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras) to discuss plans for future activities and hear reports on current activities—business section of meeting
- The regular monthly meetings typically have a theme of one of the selected health priorities (diabetes, substance abuse, tuberculosis, vector control and emergency preparedness) and speakers from both sides give presentations of what they are doing in respect to that issue—presentation section of meeting
- Officers attended and participated in the Annual Meeting of the USMX Border Health Association in Laredo this June.
- Binational Diabetes Training—Three day event held at Garner State Park for Diabetes residents, educators and providers
- Dental Services for children living in Maverick County colonias, in partnership with the Texas Health and Human Services Colonias Initiative
- Kickapoo Drug-Free Day held June 30, 2005. This was a combination of activities and events held at the Kickapoo Nation to promote responsible behavior primarily in young people.



12. TORO partnered with the City of Eagle Pass and Maverick County to collect and dispose of old tires to reduce the breeding sites for mosquitoes which may transmit West Nile Virus and Dengue Fever. Approximately 11,800 tires will be collected by county employees and local residents and properly disposed of.

Cost: \$11,800

Observations: Very nice project for vector control and reduction of mosquito-borne diseases but may be swimming upstream because it seems that there are an overwhelming number of tires left after the project. Good resident involvement, though. The mayor and county judge state that they dispose of an average of 30,000 tires per year from this area.

13. TORO supported the activities of the Los Dos Laredos Binational Health Council in accomplishing the following:

- Regular monthly meetings were held (alternating sides between Laredo and Nuevo Laredo) to discuss plans for future activities and hear reports on current activities—business section of meeting
- The regular monthly meetings typically have a theme for the meeting and speakers from both sides give presentations of what they are doing in respect to that issue—presentation section of meeting
- Every year the Los Dos Laredo Binational Health Council sponsors a Texas Border Wide Conference for all the Texas Binational Health Councils and other key players. This year, Laredo was the site chosen by the US Mx Border Health Association for their Annual Meeting, so a single combined meeting was held in June 2005. This Binational Health Council puts a lot of work into hosting this event and it is one of their main events for the year
- They were awarded \$20,000 and participated in BBHW of October 2004
- They were awarded \$15,000 to participate in BBHW of October 2005

Cost: \$25,000 (\$20,000 for conference support and \$5,000 for the regular activities of the Council)

Observations: This is one of the oldest operating and most traditionally run of all the Binational Health Councils. We plan to continue to support them. Due to funding cuts for FY06 we be unable to continue to fund at this level, though.

14. TORO partnered with the Laredo City/County Health Department to operate the “Buena Vida” program, a program to promote health awareness and management of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer through small group educational presentations and behavior modification clinics. An average of 800 new clients are enrolled each month. Clients go through health screenings and behavior assessments and attend group clinics and exercise sessions.

Cost: \$20,000

Observations: This is a good project but we will not likely be able to fund it in FY06 due to funding cuts.

15. TORO partnered with the City of El Cenizo (Webb County) to establish a committee (made up of local residents) for the Local Public Health Advisory Council for the purpose of identifying local health priorities, developing a workplan to address these health priorities and implementing the plan to address them. To date they have:

- Created the Council which is meeting regularly
- Identified local health priorities
- Developed the workplan to address the health issues

- Begun to implement the activities of vector control and community cleanups for the prevention of infectious diseases spread by mosquitoes

Cost: \$8,000

Observations: This is an area which need lots of help. It is one of the poorest and most populated colonias along the Texas border. We will fund them and their initiatives for FY06.

16. TORO partnered with the Duval County to estalish a committee (made up of local residents) for the Local Public Health Advisory Council for the purpose of identifying local health priorities, developing a workplan to address these health priorities and implementing the plan to address them. To date they have:

- Created the Council which is meeting regularly
- Identified local health priorities
- Developed the workplan to address the health issues
- Begun to implement the activities of vector control and community cleanups for the prevention of infectious diseases spread by mosquitoes

Cost: \$7,000

Observations: This is an area which need lots of help. It is a sparsely populated county with few public health resources available to them. We will fund them and their initiatives for FY06.

17. TORO partnered with the Jim Hogg County to estalish a committee (made up of local residents) for the Local Public Health Advisory Committee for the purpose of identifying local health priorities, developing a workplan to address these health priorities and implementing the plan to address them. To date they have:

- Created the Committee which is meeting regularly
- Identified local health priorities
- Developed the workplan to address the health issues
- Begun to implement the activities of vector control and community cleanups for the prevention of infectious diseases spread by mosquitoes

Cost: \$7,000

Observations: This is an area which need lots of help. It is a sparsely populated county with few public health resources available to them. We will fund them and their initiatives for FY06.

18. TORO partnered with the Starr County to estalish a committee (made up of local residents) for the Local Public Health Advisory Panel for the purpose of identifying local health priorities, developing a workplan to address these health priorities and implementing the plan to address them. To date they have:

- Created the Panel which is meeting regularly
- Identified local health priorities
- Developed the workplan to address the health issues
- Begun to work on activities to address the health issues

Cost: \$6,000

Observations: This is an area which need lots of help. It is on of the most impoverished counties in the nation with few public health resources available to them. We will fund them and their initiatives for FY06.

TORO ANNUAL REPORT—PART 3

19. TORO partnered with Dentists Who Care (a local non-profit group of approximately 150 dentists from the Valley) to provide dental services to 340 children of colonias residents in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties.

Cost: \$3,400

Observations: This is one of the biggest values we get for all our contracts. Dentist see 340 children and perform screenings, fillings, other dental work for only \$10.00 child. Our dollars allow them to pay for fuel and maintenance on the dental van and that is basically all we pay for. Actual dental services and supplies are donated by the dentists.

20. TORO partnered with the Healthy Communities Brownsville, Inc., a non-profit organization based in Cameron County, to hold 6 focus group discussions with parents of teens to determine the factors that assist parents with talking to their children about sex.

Cost: \$3,500

Observations: Parents were split into two groups with the mothers in one group and the fathers in another. The final recommendations are not compiled as of the date of this writing. The TORO Coordinator attended one of the focus groups and found the remarks to be quite honest, open and eye-opening for the values and suggestions which emerged from the group. This was a good project but not one that was not planned to be repeated. If we work with them in FY06 it would be to support the second phase of the project, to use the recommendations for policy formulation and planning of more effective methods of teen pregnancy prevention messages.

21. TORO partnered with the City of McAllen to provide 20 classes of a minimum of 20 participants each for food handler training. English and Spanish classes were available to participants. The City of McAllen provides food handler training for food establishments located within the City as part of their Retail Food Safety program. These 20 classes were in addition to the regular classes and were targeting food handlers from surrounding cities and counties which do not regularly have Food Handler Training available.

Cost: \$2,000

Observations: Very inexpensive project for the outcome produced of 400 food handlers trained at \$5.00 per person. We would like to support more projects like this and/or encourage other entities with an ongoing Food Safety program to include training as a normal part of their operations.

22. TORO partnered with La Union Del Pueblo Entero (a local non-profit organization located in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties) for the purpose of cleaning up debris, discarded appliances, old tires, etc. to reduce the potential health hazards due to vector breeding sites, infectious diseases, suffocation and injuries. Three sites in Cameron County colonias were chosen by resident commitment for the Community Clean up events.

Cost: \$2,100

Observations: Very inexpensive project for the benefit to the community and public health impact. Monies were almost all used for disposal fees at the local solid waste transfer station. Cleanup and hauling work was done by local residents. Hidalgo County provided tetanus shots to residents who needed them, animal control and mosquito spraying during the events and commitments from County Commissioners to look into ways to improve drainage for the areas.





23. TORO partnered with Hidalgo County to establish a Regional Binational Public Health Committee which includes representatives of public health agencies from Reynosa and Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico and Hidalgo and Cameron counties, Texas. The Committee developed and is implementing a strategic health improvement plan to identify the area's public health problems, develop the strategic health plan to address these problems in a binational manner. To date they have:

- Created the Committee which is meeting regularly
- Identified local health priorities
- Developed the workplan to address the health issues
- Begun to implement activities to address the health issues

Cost: \$8,000

Observations: An amazing feat to assemble so many Health Department Directors into one group which is actually working together fairly well.

This group was awarded \$30,000 from HRSA and the BHC to support Border Binational Health Week activities for the area.

This group participated in both Vaccination Weeks of the Americas for 2005.

24. TORO partnered with The Rensselaerville Institute to provide technical assistance for projects that organize Texas border residents in efforts to improve the public health of their communities.

- To date this fiscal year, they have initiated 5 community driven water and wastewater self-help projects in colonias in Hidalgo, Cameron and Starr (2 have been completed).
- They have identified local resident “sparkplug” leaders for 23 ongoing safe and healthy community mini-projects (funded between \$500-\$2,000). Examples include the Blind Birders project in which blind people are trained to identify birds by sound (Physical activity promotion) and a biking program to create bike paths atop the Rio Grande River flood control levee.

Cost: \$35,000

Plus \$55,000 from CDC Public Health Block Grant Funds

Observations: Very difficult to keep up with projects, reports and evaluations due to turnovers with TRI staff and the variety of projects undertaken. On the positive side, TRI leveraged lots of dollars from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for many of the projects and has received a large grant from EPA to develop constructed wetlands as an alternative to conventional wastewater disposal for colonias areas. We will not likely continue this partnership in FY06, although we have been working in the Office of Border Health with TRI since 1995 on hundreds of community projects for water and wastewater SELF-HELP projects in Texas colonias. Most of this work has now been adopted by the Texas Water Development Board and Office of Rural Community Affairs.